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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Afghanistan

SUBJECT Customs/Hydroelectric Project/Dams/Roads/Canals,Lakes/
Trade with USSR

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1. Customs Inspection Not Thorough. The most widely-used entry into Afghanistan is from West Pakistan through the Khyber Pass. Four Customs stops are required in crossing the border; one about ten miles east on the Pakistan side, one each by each country at the border; and another about ten miles to the west in Afghanistan. The inspections are not at all thorough - the process consisting primarily of taking a cup of tea with the Customs official.
2. Peshawar to Kabul - 12 hours by Automobile. The trip from Peshawar to Kabul is only 180 miles by road through the Khyber Pass, but its transit requires some 12 hours of driving. The first 30 miles out of Peshawar is good, two-lane road with black-top surfacing. The other 150 miles of road is dirt surface, allowing only very slow automobile speeds. Drainage is very poor, and washouts frequently make the road impassable for two or three days at a time in the Spring. Winter snows may also prevent passage at times.
3. Economic Outlook Dim. The people of Afghanistan are generally well-fed, but very raggedly dressed. Little is seen that would indicate any likelihood of economic conditions improving appreciably in the future. The critical need in Afghanistan is for persons trained in the technical fields.
4. Strong Nationalism. Afghanistan sympathies are somewhat with the US and with Germany. They are anti-Communist, but above all, they are strongly nationalistic.
5. Widespread Corruption in Public Life. The Afghanistan people seem to be almost cruel in nature, showing little concern for persons as individuals. The average citizen has little recourse in law. Corruption is quite widespread in public life and seems to be expected inasmuch as public officers probably could not sustain themselves on their legal pay.

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6. Servants to Foreigners Must Have Police Permit. Servants in Kabul are required to obtain a police permit prior to taking employment with a foreigner.
7. Officials Favor Maintenance of Political Status Quo. There is no attempt on the part of government to create a political awareness in the public. The general feeling among political and civic figures is that it would only be inviting trouble to attempt to educate the masses in things political. They have experienced bloody uprisings in the past and want no more of that sort of thing. Their apprehension is carried even to the extent of discouraging self-government within the schools. Maintenance of the status quo is their apparent objective.
8. Possible Source of Dissidence. Since World War II, the Afghanistan government has sent two hundred to three hundred students to various US universities. All of the students' school expenses plus approximately \$150 per month each for miscellaneous expenses were covered by the Afghanistan government in return for a contract with each student for subsequent employment with the Afghanistan government at \$15 to \$20 per month, the employment to last two years for every year spent in school. Many of these individuals are frustrated by their return to a low standard of living and by their inability to improve their own and the national economic status. They, as are almost all well-educated Afghans, are dissatisfied with their country and would much prefer to live abroad. This group constitutes a possible source of trouble in the future, although no outward manifestations of unrest have been observed as yet.
9. Hydroelectric Plant at Sarobi. The Ziemans Company's (German firm) hydroelectric construction at Sarobi on the Kabul River is not yet producing any power although the plant has been under construction for about four years. (It is interesting to note that a large US construction company in bidding, is said to have estimated one year to be the maximum total time required to complete the project.) The dam for this installation is 30 or 40 feet high and is anchored to the walls of a canyon. A power tunnel within the canyon face has been constructed to carry the water several miles downstream to the generating plant where a head of 100 to 150 feet will be available. Probably only two turbines will be installed initially; however, the present construction will provide the space for a total of three. The final installation of the two turbines will probably be completed sometime late in 1955.
10. Power Transmission from Sarobi to Kabul. The power from the Sarobi station will eventually be routed to Kabul via a well-designed transmission system, the line being supported on steel towers. It can be expected, however, that much of the power will be lost in the inefficient distribution system within Kabul. Presently, one-third of the power supplied to Kabul is lost in the transmission within the city, and another third is stolen. The availability of power within Kabul at any given time is a very uncertain thing. It is not unusual to have the voltage drop unexpectedly from the intended 220 volts down to 30 or 40.
11. Kabul Receiving Power from Jabul-us-Siraj. Kabul is presently mid-1954 receiving all of its power from hydroelectric plants at Jabul-us-Siraj (about 50 miles north of Kabul) and Chaki-Wardok (believed to be about the same distance west northwest of Kabul). Both of these installations were built by German engineers 15 to 20 years ago and are well maintained. The plant at Jabul-us-Siraj has three turbines supplied from a small earth dam. The plant at Chaki-Wardok is believed to be similar.
12. Hydroelectric Plant at Pul-i-Khumri. ($35^{\circ}56'N$, $68^{\circ}44'E$, World Aeronautical Chart 431.) The hydroelectric plant at Pul-i-Khumri provides power primarily for the textile mill in that town. This installation was also built by German engineers 15 to 20 years ago. It is well maintained at present by German technicians. The dam is of concrete construction, about three hundred feet wide and 20 to 30 feet high. There are three vertical turbines, utilizing a low head (about 20 feet.)

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13. Morrison-Knudsen Dam Construction in the Kandahar Area. The Morrison-Knudsen Company has recently [presumably 1953] completed two small earthen irrigation dams in the vicinity of Kandahar. They are the Kajkai Dam ($32^{\circ}16'N$, $65^{\circ}03'E$ on World Aeronautical Chart 430), and the Arghandab Dam (approximately $30^{\circ}40'N$, $65^{\circ}33'E$ on World Aeronautical Chart 442). Kajkai has a small generating plant for the operation of valves and gates, but no surplus power is produced. A power tunnel was constructed, by-passing the dam to the south, but it has been blocked off completely, and there is no indication that it will be used in the near future.
14. Roads in the Kandahar Area. There is a road connecting the Kajkai and Arghandab Dams mentioned above, however, it is not shown on the World Aeronautical Charts 430, 431 or 442. It is a well-constructed road, two lanes wide with a gravel surface, and it follows a nearly direct route from Kajkai to the Arghandab Dam and beyond to the Morrison-Knudsen Camp just east of Kandahar. Automobiles may proceed at 40 to 50 miles per hour on this road but it has begun to washboard since the Afghans took it over a year ago [1953] and will probably be beyond repair in another year. The road from Kandahar to Chaman (West Pakistan) is in a similar stage of deterioration. It is of the same type of construction but is much better aligned.
15. Roads in General. Kabul has the only paved roads in Afghanistan, and even that city has only two or three miles paved. Roads generally are not well-constructed; they are of graded gravel or dirt, narrow, and poorly aligned. Satisfactory bridges are almost non-existent in Afghanistan.
16. Shemalan Canal. The Shemalan Canal is currently [mid-1954] supplying irrigation water to the Nadiali area approximately 80 miles to the west of Kandahar. This canal draws water from the Helmand River at approximately $31^{\circ}50'N$, $64^{\circ}36'E$ (World Aeronautical Chart 442) and carries it approximately 18 miles west southwest to the vicinity of several model (planned) villages which have never been inhabited. Experimental farming has been undertaken in this area.
17. Lakes Not Shown on Map. There are five lakes formed by the Band-i-Amir River which are not shown on the World Aeronautical Charts mentioned above, and are believed not to be shown on any popular map. These lakes are located roughly in the east-west section of the Rud-i-Band-i-Amir in the vicinity of $35^{\circ}18'N$, $66^{\circ}22'E$, as shown on World Aeronautical Chart 430. The largest of these lakes is the farthest upstream and is approximately one mile wide and ten miles long, its length generally following the course of the river. Going downstream, the other lakes follow one another in close succession becoming progressively smaller, the lowest and smallest lake being about one-half a mile wide and one-half a mile long.
18. Gasoline Imports from USSR. A sizeable trade with Russia is carried on, the Afghans receiving gasoline, bicycles and cloth in return for raw wool and cotton. About fifty percent of Afghanistan's gasoline comes in from Peshawar and the other fifty percent from the Soviet border in the vicinity of Termez (north of Mazar-i-Sharif). Its transport is accomplished in small, rectangular, steel tanks (about $3' \times 1' \times 2'$) which are crated and loaded onto trucks for the trip south. It is not known whether or not there is a bridge spanning the river at Termez inasmuch as foreign nationals are restricted from an area within five miles of the entire Afghanistan border (with the entry points excepted of course).
19. Rumors Concerning Afghanistan/USSR Agreements. There were rumors in Kabul in January 1954 to the effect that some sort of trade agreement has been reached between Afghanistan and the USSR in which the USSR would receive Afghanistan cotton and wool in return for Soviet machinery.

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20. Soviet Propaganda Effort. The Soviet government has, upon one occasion at least, extended invitations to Afghanistan government to send individuals to Moscow on short propaganda visits of seven to ten days. In the winter of 1953 the Afghanistan government did select about five people to make such a trip. One of these was Mir Ansari, the head of the Faculty (College) of Literature, University of Kabul. Ansari has spent about seven years of his life in the US; he is a graduate of the University of Chicago and has an American wife. Ansari returned from this trip relating glowing tales of the wonders of Moscow; he was particularly impressed with its lack of slums. He did not seem to think it at all significant that the entire tour was carefully planned and conducted and that he was not allowed to take any photographs but, rather, was given a number of select photographs to take with him upon departing the country.

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